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Quo tendis?
Hor.

AFTER many discouragements, we have at length persevered so far in our work, as to have finished two volumes, and to have commenced a third. With what success our labors have been attended, it does not become us to say. We are willing to let them be their own advocate; we will neither trumpet forth our own praises, nor count the adulation of others; but will leave them to stand or fall by their own merits alone.

In commencing another volume, it may not be amiss to pause a=

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while in our career, to take a brief retrospect of our past course, and to drop a few hints with regard to our conduct for the future.

In the choice of our subjects, we may not have been happy; — we have had at least variety. We have endeavored to avoid the common course of subjects chosen for works like our own; and we may therefore be forgiven if we often have deviated too far. But in our Aeronautic character, how can we provide against the sudden gales we are always liable to encounter? How can we be certain that we shall be able to proceed in a steady and uncrotched manner, without laboring under any difficulties, and without being exposed to any dangers?

When we first commenced, the principal difficulty we apprehended, was this choice of subjects, of which

we have been speaking. We feared, that nearly all the subjects suitable for essays like our own, had already been usurped by the vast multitude of ~~writers~~ periodical essayists. But as our experience advanced, our fears vanished; and we may confidently venture to assert at this moment, that our numbers will never be suspended for want of subjects. The vast field of human acquirement is open; the philosophy of mind, the extensive range of morals, the inexhaustible mine of religious knowledge; will not we ~~do~~ are confident be barren in producing subjects.

Perhaps we have not sufficiently noticed the manners of the day.— On this head an apology is requisite; but the only excuse we can plead is, that we have not only been anticipated in this department by other essayists, the follies and vices of society ever remaining the

same; but that we have often turned away with displeasure and even disgust from the prevalent manners of the world; in the retirement of our closets we have felt little inclination to muse on those subjects which gave us these feelings; and we have therefore taken refuge in themes more congenial to our taste & inclination. The reader therefore of our former volumes must not compare them with the introductory paper that announced our plan and our intentions. An author, especially in a work of this nature, can never tell what exactly will be his course, and should therefore avoid giving any formal statement of his plan before he applies himself to the task. These remarks may appear to come strangely from us, who, some may be inclined to think, were rather extravagant at the first

in our hopes, we will not say, in our pretensions, for we pretended to nothing; we avowed our intention of throwing ourselves entirely upon the resources of our minds and of our information; we assumed no title to superior wisdom, even in a jocular way: — but we have learnt wisdom by experience, and though the past cannot be recalled, yet we may be permitted to repent of our errors, and endeavor to mend for the future

We shall therefore waive all further expatiation on the plan of our essays. We may, and probably shall, pursue the same course; — but we shall consider ourselves bound to no precise method. The course we have followed may appear to some as inconsistent as the character whose name we have assumed.

But can the navigators of the aërial bark, as we have before hinted, ever calculate for a moment on the certainty of their course?

We have skimmed with a wide range through the gloomy vale of antiquity, and the sparkling scenes of modern refinement; sighed amid the ruins of Egypt, gazed upon the monuments of Greece, of Italy, of the East; wandered through the many darkness of the middle ages; and lingered amid the light and literature of the present ~~era~~ period. We have caught, though sparingly, a few gleams from poetry and romance; and we have not been deficient in endeavoring to sympathise with the feelings of the human heart, to point out the various operations of the mind, & in mingling occasionally with the sorrows &

disappointments of life. Our views, as we at first predicted, and as might be expected, have been but superficial; we have shunk from pretending to knowledge which we did not possess, and of usurping the chair of criticism over others, under which it would well behove us to sit ourselves. But of this jam satis.

The task of an essayist is always replete with difficulty. He must avoid at once, dogmatism, pedantry, and deep discussion. He must please while he instructs. He must make the page yield at once both profit and delight; shunning both elaborate dulness, and trifling inefficiency. To these assertions, let the ~~best~~ annals of essay-writing bear universal testimony. Let the multitudes of adventurers

in this department of literature, who have been compelled to draw in their pinions, & grovel in the dust, bear witness. The proudest efforts of genius have sunk before the humiliating conviction that they were not suited to what was required of an essayist: & have fallen into obscurity, mingled with the promiscuous crowd of ~~vanquished~~ unsuccessful competitors, whose dulness, and whose want of taste, of feeling, of originality either of sentiment or expression, checked their vainly presuming career. An essayist must possess talents of a peculiar kind to ensure his success. And how few have been crowned with that success they fondly anticipated! How few have been possessed of the requisite faculties of mind! — How few have risen above the obstacles that fettered their progress,

and shone forth, in dazzling lustre to astonish, delight, and benefit mankind! –

Those few stand, illustrious monuments of human genius; – bright and sparkling gems in the diadem of literary fame. But at the same time, they seem as it were insulated from the rest of mankind. We gaze upon them with awe, as we would upon the beacon placed upon a tremendous cliff in the midst of a wild & various ocean. They dazzle & delight, they pour the salutary beams of light around, but their loftiness checks the ardor of enthusiasm, their grandeur chills the fire that would seek in vain to emulate them.

We ourselves gaze upon them with this sublime awe. We would not venture to track their glorious footsteps. Should we at-

=tempt, we feel convinced the endea-
=vor would be fruitless. We should
be in the end compelled to retire
in mortification and disappoint-
=ment. We write without a wish
or an attempt to imitate any
who have gone before us. We
would improve by their experience,
and profit by their knowledge;
but we would follow our own
course, not from that ridiculous
self-sufficiency which thinks no
real good dwells but in its own
breast, but from that thinking
which we must naturally feel,
to tread for a moment in the
road, which Addison, Johnson,
Hawkesworth, Cumberland, and
their illustrious compeers, have
already enriched by their exertions.

In our own country, there has
been however, a lamentable
deficiency in this species of writing.

Of the few that have claimed as essay-
-ists in America, the greater part have
been unworthy of the name. They
have shot forth their feeble and mo-
-mentary spark, and have then sunk
at once into merited oblivion. No
hand shall undraw the veil that
conceals them from posterity. They
are already held in contempt, if at
all remembered; while the very
scanty proportion of those who have
enriched American literature by
their essays, are read and dwelt
upon with delight. It may not be
without amusement, to trace in
some future number of the Al-
-bionaut, the progress of essay-wri-
-ting in this country, together
with a list of the most of those
that have been published. The
essays of a country are in general
a pretty good sample of the state

of literature therein; and we shall be happy if our researches will tend to throw any light upon the literary history of our county, and to add any additional leaf to her coronet.

In the mean time, most courteous reader, we launch one more into the æthereal realms, where thou mayest watch the progress, and detect the mistakes, criticise the flight, and if thou pleasest, predict the fall of the AERONAUT.-

E.